

Guards at Lincoln's Tomb (1845)

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Burial

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The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

Guards at Lincoln's Tomb

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

When Abraham Lincoln was laid to rest in Springfield, Ill., one of the six men who lifted the coffin bearing the martyred President's body into the vault was C. B. Edwards, 6049 East Washington street, who at that time was stationed with his regiment in Springfield.

"I remember it as well as if it were yesterday," said Mr. Edwards, "that sad time. I guarded the coffin, too, as it lay in state for the people to pay last homage, taking my turn with seven other men for twenty-four hours. Eight of us marched in front of the hearse the five miles to Oak Ridge and then stood guard in the cemetery for several days afterward. Such crowds as were there. General Hooker and many others were there. I had re-enlisted so that my time was not out. That was the way I happened to be in the service. I was with the 14th Iowa regiment. Thirty of us were detailed to provost duty there. I think I am the only living one of those honorary pallbearers at Lincoln's funeral service in Springfield.

"I enlisted in the first year of the war in Iowa. I was just nineteen. I served all through the strife and was in Andersonville prison six months. Those days I can hardly bear to think of! When you read of the horrors of Andersonville, you may know it's not exaggerated. Only the strong men survived. We were fed mule meat and glad enough to get that, but we only had it about twice a week. We got ground corn, too. That would have been all right if we could have had enough of it, but every morning men had died in the night from starvation. I've seen as many as 500 in a row in the prison lying down to sleep, half of whom never awakened. Think of it, there were 60,000 in the stockade of about twenty acres at one time. There would hardly be room to move.

Finally Exchanged.

"We were finally exchanged, 20,000 of us. Wasn't that wonderful news. Nobody but those who had gone through such an experience can know the joy we felt when they told us we were going home! We had to walk seventy-five miles before we struck a railroad, too. I can remember to this day how those boys looked to me that day—my thought was that they looked just like pumpkins stuck on sticks, they were so thin and their heads looked so big on skeleton frames. If it hadn't been for the thought of home carrying them along, I don't think half of them could have ever made that walk. Many did fall by the roadside, dead or dying.

"We were out on a foraging expedition when we were captured, loading up cotton. Ten wagons with two men to a wagon were in the crew. A rebel regiment surprised us, and although we gave them a running fight, we were too few to put up much of a battle. However, I lived through everything and am now eighty-three years old, so I guess I was a hardy one for sure. Why, at Shiloh my regiment was cut down to 200. I was captured another time, but was exchanged after four months at Salisbury, Tenn., and it wasn't so bad in that prison. I was wounded twice, was in thirty-



C. B. EDWARDS.

one engagements, including Vicksburg and the Red river expedition. Billie Sherman sent 10,000 of us one day to reinforce some troops and we saved the day at Pleasant Hill, La. I was under Grant for several years and was then put under Sherman after the siege at Vicksburg. One of the great men in the war was our commanding officer, General A. J. Smith. There was a man!

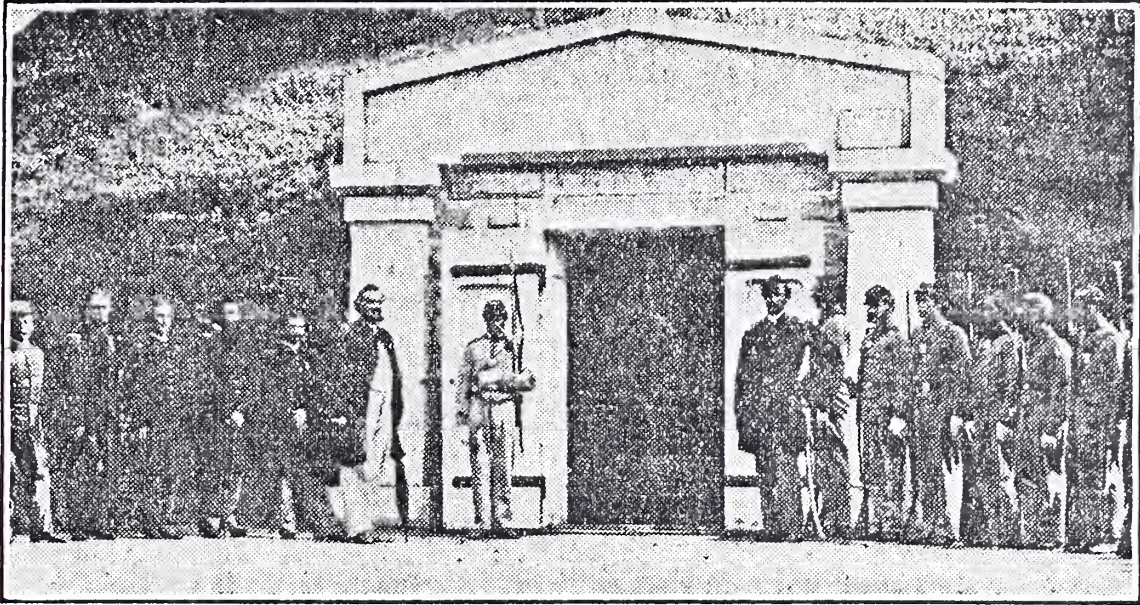
Killed Face to Face.

"Men in the late war may think that we fellows had an easy time in the civil war compared to the times overseas, but it was a fearful struggle. We didn't have the poison gases and the modern wartime inventions, but we had to go out and kill men face to face, there was no long distance mass killing for us. There were pain and suffering and horrors."

Mr. Edwards is quite a movie fan and walks down to the movie theater quite often. He is a stalwart, tall, keen-eyed, white-bearded veteran with the erect carriage and quick soldierly step that characterizes many of the civil war fighters. He is "sound as a nut," according to his own assertion, with a strong "hankering for fishing." He is a lively story-teller. Mr. Edwards lived for a number of years in Greencastle, and is affiliated with the G. A. R. post there. He lives with his daughter, Mrs. Bert A. Wright, and Mr. Wright. He has a son, C. B. Edwards, who also lives in Indianapolis.

I. N. May 22-25

SAN DIEGO VETERAN GUARDED "ABE'S" TOMB



The guard of honor selected from the 24th Michigan regiment, as it appeared standing in front of Lincoln's tomb in 1865. At the right of the entrance is Lt.-Col. Albert M. Edwards, commander of the regiment and the guard. He is the father of Fred L. Edwards of this city, through whose courtesy the picture was obtained.

How the "Iron Brigade" of Lt.-Col. Albert M. Edwards, the 24th Michigan regiment, stood guard over the tomb of the martyred Abraham Lincoln at Springfield, Ill., in 1865, was retold today by Fred L. Edwards, local radio expert, son of the Civil war hero.

Lt.-Col. Edwards' exploits with his troops are recounted in a book, "The History of the Iron Brigade," by O. B. Curtis, son of a brother officer of Edwards and a cousin of Heber Curtis, noted astronomer of the Mt. Wilson observatory.

The 24th Michigan was selected as the guard of honor because of its record during the war, F. L. Edwards said today. At that time the colonel met the girl who afterwards became his wife in the Springfield photograph gallery of his uncle, F. W. Ingmire, who took the accompanying picture.

Col. Edwards died here in 1909.

Another interesting sidelight on the Lincoln tomb was revealed by M. O. Williamson, 85, former state treasurer of Illinois. He has just broken a silence of 22 years to tell how he and 15 other members of a board of trustees of the Lincoln Memorial obtained consent of Robert Lincoln, son of the martyred president, to view the body before it was sealed forever.

Workmen unsealed the old sarcophagus in 1902 and reverently the assemblage viewed the remains, the last time they were seen by human eyes. The casket was then sealed in an eight-foot block of concrete and placed in the Lincoln Memorial, some 20 feet below the surface of the ground. There it is expected to stay indefinitely.

